

► NASHUA

# Cleanup prepares riverbank for asbestos removal

■ Contaminated trees,  
debris gone from  
Johns-Manville site.

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Telegraph Staff

**NASHUA** — After several weeks of delays, a cleanup crew has reported to a site along the Nashua River to prepare the area for asbestos removal.

Clearing of vegetation, trees and scrap tin dumped along the 800-foot riverbank — privately owned land behind 40 Broad St. where the Johns-Manville plant once stood — got underway late last week and is already halfway completed, Tim Beauchemin, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, reported during a Wednesday afternoon tour of the site.

Once this site preparation phase is completed, Beauchemin said, between 20 and 30 crew members will don

**A crew uses heavy equipment to remove a pile of debris — including discarded tin — on Wednesday from the banks of the Nashua River near Bridge Street in Nashua.**

white hazardous-material suits, construct a temporary 50-foot watertight enclosure on the river, and begin scraping the asbestos-contaminated riverbed sediment into piles to be removed by high-powered vacuums and hauled away. This second phase must be completed during the river's low-flow period, which typically lasts until mid-October, he added.

Crews will then turn to restoring the riverbank area and planting grass and trees, Beauchemin said, predicting the entire process would be com-

pleted by late fall.

The Environmental Protection Agency, which has contracted with the Army Corps for the work, has linked the asbestos to wastewater running from a discharge pipe out of the former Johns-Manville facility, where asbestos products were produced throughout most of this century until 1985. A known carcinogen, asbestos is hazardous to the lungs when inhaled in airborne particles. The factory was demolished early last year.

During the tour, state and federal officials took turns empha-

sizing their efforts to keep the public informed about the project, encouraging Nashuans to visit the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Response Team site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.wert.org> or contact the city's environmental health department at 594-3356 for updates.

They also took pains to explain the decision to cut and haul away trees from the site.

"This is a steep bank," Beauchemin said. "And the asbestos has been there so long,

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it's in the (tree) roots." Several of the trees were badly rotted, he added, pointing out that new trees would be planted in 12 inches of new topsoil and would likely fare better. "They don't root very well in asbestos."

And monitoring air quality control throughout the process will be a priority, they emphasized, pointing out two of several stations of air monitoring devices already collecting data around the area.

"Wherever we are working and there are residents, we are monitoring," Beauchemin said. Still, he added, "We don't expect to see a single fiber."

Two of the site's most immediate

neighbors, a couple living in the adjoining Thoreau's Landing development, said they were glad to know that such safeguards were in place and said they were pleased with the work they've been closely eyeing from their backyard across the river from the site.

"I was here when they took Johns-Manville down, and I have no complaint," Dede Schiraldi said. "The noise isn't that great, and after all, the purpose of it is a clean river."

Her husband, Joe, agreed, adding that as former New Yorkers, they still preferred their otherwise idyllic stretch of the Nashua River and its soon-to-be-solved problems to the considerably greater ones of their last nearby river, the Hudson.

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